

from dipping further than we have already seen it fall.

Indeed, "We cannot escape history. We hold the power, and bear the responsibility. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of Earth."

President Lincoln, truer words were never spoken.

DIPLOMA ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CHU. Mr. Speaker, for so many, education is the key to the American Dream. But for so many, a good education seems like it is beyond reach. That is why I am introducing the DIPLOMA Act, or Developing Innovative Partnerships and Learning Opportunities that Motivate Achievement.

This legislation will address obstacles to learning by giving out grants to schools, social service programs, and the local community to create comprehensive, community-based solutions that will ensure that our struggling students will succeed.

For awhile now, I have advocated for changing the tone of debate that surrounds school reform. Too often critics point fingers instead of offering solutions. That is why I am pushing for real change, dramatic change in our schools that harnesses the energy of parents, the community, and the school to turn around our failing schools that lift up all our students.

Now, there is no denying that this approach can be challenging and hard work, but research shows when communities, parents, and schools collaborate and work together, there is nothing we can't achieve. I know this because I have seen it firsthand in my district.

In East Los Angeles, Esteban E. Torres High School is a shining example of a community school. It's the first new school built in the neighborhood in 85 years, and its facilities and classrooms are simply magnificent. But to me, the most awe-inspiring part is the community-based approach at the heart of Esteban Torres. With the help of the Los Angeles Education Partnership and the Federal Full Service Community Schools Grant Program, Esteban Torres tapped into the resources of the surrounding community to overcome challenges facing their students regarding health care, limited English proficiency, and financial literacy.

Esteban Torres partnered with Bienvenidos for a full-service health service on campus that will help maintain the health and well-being of their students so they are ready and able to learn.

Pan American Bank partnered to help the high schoolers create a student-run financial center to teach the importance of a budget and proper money management, skills which will stick with these students for the rest of their lives.

Luis Rodriguez and Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural joined the effort to establish the first-ever bookstore in East Los Angeles, making it easier for students to expand their education outside their classroom.

And the effect of these programs is apparent on the smiles of the students' faces on their way to school, in the cafeteria and the classroom. This type of engagement and support is giving students in the community new opportunities and opening their world.

Across America, our students face problems like homelessness, lack of health care, and limited English proficiency. Research tells us that two-thirds of the achievement gap is due to factors outside of school, and even the best teachers have a hard time overcoming these obstacles.

□ 1020

A recent study from Chicago found that when we don't address students' social and economic disadvantages outside schools, the hard work done inside the school can be futile. That's why the DIPLOMA Act is so necessary. Local groups can coordinate, integrate, and facilitate services aimed at strengthening student achievement, such as dropout prevention, family engagement, tutoring, extending learning services, health care, and social support. The bill contains strong accountability measures, including independent evaluations to measure results and identify best practices.

These partnerships will make a difference in the lives of students in my district. When students are provided the right kind of support and opportunities to help them learn, nothing can stop them. The DIPLOMA Act ensures that America's next Nobel Prize laureate can come from any background or community because they had the support they needed to succeed.

BREAKING WASHINGTON'S ADDICTION TO TAXPAYERS' MONEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, is President Obama really pushing to raise taxes while unemployment hovers around 9 percent just to get an increase in the debt limit?

Republicans beg to disagree. Increasing taxes on American job creators and families will mean fewer new jobs are created, which will result in more Americans remaining unemployed. Washington does not need tax hikes to raise the debt ceiling. Washington needs spending cuts. The Federal Government is addicted to taxpayer money. The solution is not giving it more of Americans' hard-earned money. No. The solution is to halt the runaway spending and permanently reform Washington's reckless spending habits.

We can fix this problem and pay our bills on time, Mr. Speaker. However,

refusing to cut spending and going with status quo tax hikes would be a recipe for disaster that will rob future generations of a chance to fulfill the American Dream.

DEBT CRISIS AGENDA FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFazio. It's clear to the American public that Congress, especially the Senate, is very good at doing one thing—and that is nothing.

Now, perhaps we can capitalize on this strength to resolve the impasse over the deficit reduction. Well, how could that work? How could Congress do nothing but solve this problem? Well, within 17 months, by doing nothing, we could lower the deficit by \$3.8 trillion. In fact, the President could reinforce the message. Just in case Congress decided to do something, he could say, No, if they do that, I will pocket veto it. I will do nothing. So we've got a good chance here: Congress does nothing or the President pocket vetoes, he does nothing, we can save \$3.8 trillion. Problem solved.

How do we do that? We allow all the Bush tax cuts to expire. Now, you heard the gentlelady, Oh, my God, the job creators will pay more. Yeah, the billionaire hedge fund guys on Wall Street might pay a little bit more in taxes; they're creating so many jobs today. And the other millionaires. Warren Buffet says it's kind of ironic that he pays a much lower tax rate than his secretary.

Now, if we let the Bush tax cuts expire and adopted some modest reforms, those inequities would no longer be in place, and we could have over \$4 trillion of deficit reduction with a little bit of shared sacrifice. Yes, it would ask the millionaires and billionaires to pay as much as they did in the Clinton era. In an era when we had 3.8 percent unemployment, we actually paid down debt in this country. It was good for all Americans. And we asked those who were most capable to contribute the most. But we asked a little bit of everybody. That's what this doing nothing would do.

Now, after we've restored some confidence here by this big step of doing nothing, we could do another half of nothing and put people back to work. How could we do half of nothing and put people back to work? Well, President Obama has adopted this cockamamie Republican idea of a Social Security tax holiday putting people to work. I know a lot of families that can use an extra \$20 a week. That's true. But them spending \$20 a week on junk made in China or food on the table doesn't put any Americans back to work. And if you're unemployed today—one of the 18 million unemployed—you don't get the \$20 a week. We're borrowing \$110 billion to

do that under the guise that this is creating the jobs. And the President mentioned last night he wants to continue creating jobs that way. Well, guess what? It's not working.

So we do half of nothing. We allow the Social Security tax holiday to expire. It doesn't create any jobs. We don't borrow the \$110 billion from China to put in the Social Security trust fund. Instead, we borrow \$110 billion to put people back to work in private sector jobs. We resolve to begin to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

That \$110 billion applied to the 150,000 bridges falling down on the Federal system, the \$80 billion backlog on our transit vehicles, the pavement that's disintegrating across the country could put millions to work. And not just construction workers. Engineers would go to work, people who manufacture things—steel, buses, tires, engines. All those people would go to work. We could put millions to work.

Guess what that does? When people go to work, they don't collect unemployment, they don't need food stamps to feed their family, and they pay taxes. That reduces the deficit, too. So by doing one big nothing and one half of nothing and then one little action to put people back to work—nothing that anybody's talking about around here. Where are the jobs? Who's talking about jobs? We need jobs.

Let's stop blathering around here. Let's resolve to do nothing and solve the debt crisis and resolve to do half of nothing and then apply the money that we save by doing that nothing to putting people back to work.

That's an agenda a little more productive for the American people.

SAVING TAXPAYER MONEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I want to cover two or three things very briefly here this morning.

First of all, The Washington Post reported on its front page yesterday that "U.S. taxpayer money has been indirectly funneled to the Taliban under a \$2.16 billion transportation contract."

This is crazy. It should not be part of the job of the U.S. military to promote Afghan businesses. The official report found "documented, credible evidence of involvement in a criminal enterprise of support for the enemy." This is ridiculous. And it comes on the heels of a report last week that the Navy had spent at least \$300 million on two ships that were never completed, never sent on a mission, and are now headed for a salvage yard in Brownsville, Texas.

Are there no fiscal conservatives at the Pentagon? Sadly, most people in Congress today are afraid to cut the Defense Department for fear they will appear to be unpatriotic. Yet it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that it's unpatriotic to continue with megabillions in wasteful spending or billions in spend-

ing that promotes businesses in other countries. No part of the Federal Government should be immune from having to save taxpayer money. The American people would be far better off today if every Department and agency had to take a fair, across-the-board 10 percent cut.

Let me mention a couple of other things. We're going to vote later today on the Keystone pipeline project. This is a project that will provide 20,000 jobs and also will lead to 500,000 gallons of oil coming into this country each day. This will help bring down the price of gasoline. And yet it is opposed by a very powerful group of wealthy environmentalists. Most of these environmentalists today seem to come from very upper-income or very wealthy families and perhaps they don't realize how much they hurt the poor and the lower-income and the working people by destroying jobs and driving up prices. But that's what they're doing, and they're certainly doing that in blocking or delaying this Keystone pipeline project.

We also need to make sure that more jobs are created in this country in every way possible. Just today in The Washington Post, there's a poll that says that 49 percent of the American people are finding it very difficult to find jobs and 33 percent say somewhat difficult. Eighty-two percent of the American people say that it's difficult to find jobs in this country today. Yet we continue to cave in to environmental radicals that destroy jobs and really do just nothing other than help foreign energy producers.

□ 1030

So I think it's time that we start siding with the American people and stop siding with foreign energy producers.

Lastly, let me just say that the most false thing that has been said during this debate over the debt ceiling is that some people are trying to help billionaires or multimillionaires. No one is trying to help the billionaires. They can help themselves. What the debate is about is: Do you want the money spent by the Federal Government, and they will spend it without any question in the most wasteful, least effective, least efficient way possible; or do you want the money to be in the private sector, where it will do much more to create jobs and hold down prices?

If that weren't true, the Soviet Union or Cuba would have been heaven on Earth because, in those countries, the government took almost all the money. So it's not about protecting billionaires, not in the least.

NO ILLUSIONS: A CLEAR-EYED SMART SECURITY APPROACH IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, General David Petraeus relin-

quished control of the Afghanistan command. He did this as he prepares to take over as CIA Director this fall.

We are all grateful to General Petraeus for 37 years of honorable and distinguished service, but the fact remains that the fundamental realities in Afghanistan haven't changed. The New York Times put it plainly, noting that the general is "leaving behind a country racked by deep political instability, whose fledgling security forces are fighting a weakened but deadly insurgency that kills coalition troops and Afghan civilians and officials nearly every day."

That's a pretty damning assessment, Mr. Speaker, and it's accurate.

In recent weeks, two of President Karzai's most powerful allies, including his brother, have been gunned down by the Taliban, and ordinary Afghan citizens are caught in the line of fire as never, never before. The U.N. recently reported that more Afghan civilians were killed in the first half of 2011 than in any other 6-month period since the war began. Some of these casualties are the accidental result of errant attacks and night raids by U.S. and NATO forces, but the overwhelming majority of civilian deaths came at the hands of insurgents who were often using suicide bombers.

There were nearly 1,500 civilian deaths between January and June, but according to the U.N., that might be a low estimate given that it doesn't include killings in northern Afghanistan in the last few months, because the U.N. closed its office in that region after it was attacked by a mob that killed several staffers.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that after nearly a decade of war we haven't been able to vanquish the enemy and bring stability and security to Afghanistan. If after 10 years we can't do more to subdue the insurgency, then clearly—clearly—we must be doing something wrong. Clearly, there must be a better approach.

I've been pushing for that new approach for many years now. It's called SMART Security. It's based on the belief that sending 100,000 troops to occupy a sovereign country is not the best way to win trust and to promote peace, which has proven to fan the flames of resentment, to give increased momentum to extremists and to put the lives of American troops and Afghan civilians in danger.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, is an Afghanistan civilian surge as bold as the military surge that has gotten us further entangled in this failed war. That's what SMART Security is all about. Instead of sending troops, let's send humanitarian aid. Let's send our civilian experts who can help rebuild Afghan schools and hospitals, who can help—and I say "help" because we want the Afghan people to be doing this, but we can help where necessary—rebuild the political infrastructure and rule of law that will strengthen Afghan democracy, who can promote political